

Minutes
WATER POLICY TASK FORCE
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
February 10, 2005

1.0 CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dennis Washburn called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

2.0 PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Task Force member Gerald Greene announced that there would be a Compton Creek Workshop on Saturday morning at Compton College. Otherwise, there were no public comments.

3.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the minutes of the December 9, 2004 meeting was deferred to the end of the meeting. Prior to adjournment, the minutes were approved without objection and with one abstention.

4.0 PRESENTATION ITEMS FOR THE TASK FORCE

4.1 An Introductory Dialogue with Councilmember Mary Ann Lutz, a new Member of the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board

Monrovia City Councilmember Mary Ann Lutz, recently appointed by the Governor to the Regional Water Board, introduced herself and summarized some of the proposed Board goals that were discussed at a recent Board retreat. She noted that budget cuts had eliminated 20 staff positions at the Board, creating backlogs in many areas of work. The Board is concerned about compliance with the 316(b) rule and its interplay with renewal of NPDES permits. The more significant permits will be the Tapia wastewater reclamation facility, the power plants and the Hyperion wastewater plant. Another important topic is the State Board's desire to standardize more of the NPDES permit issuing process. TMDL activities will focus on the 303(d) water impairment list. The staff is looking at an agricultural waiver in the TMDL planning work in the Calleguas Creek Watershed. Another point of review are 401 permits that involve storm weather emergency situations involving pollutants that require immediate intervention. Mary Ann confirmed that Jonathan Bishop had received the permanent appointment as the Board's Executive Officer. She noted that the triennial Basin Plan review process would not look at the entire Plan but would identify certain issues such as hydromodification of drainage areas for special research, ammonia pollution, and perchlorate contamination. There's some question about the future of the regional groundwater and brownfield remediation programs staffing, given the Governor's performance review recommendations that these activities be shifted to the state. Many are concerned that local and regional decision making is better equipped to deal with these kinds of problems rather than turning it over to state officials. Mary Ann suggested that AB 885, a septic pollution bill, requires the writing of rules and guidelines. In the meantime the Board has been seeking to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the cities in the Basin. So far only the County and the City of Los Angeles have executed a MOU with the Board. In response to her question about why so many cities have not done this already, a Task Force member (TFM) Gerald Greene suggested that the cities have been slow to respond because of concern about responsibilities without resources and about the lack of information about the location of septic systems. Another member, Heather Merenda, said that connecting septic systems to sewers may involve new treatment facilities. Chair Washburn indicated that this is a complex situation and the Task Force would be a good forum for follow up discussion with Ms. Lutz and other regulators. Ms. Lutz indicated that

she hopes the Board will work with cities more constructively and give greater attention to economic impacts and to Basin review opportunities.

The Chair then introduced new members. Tom Erb described his duties with the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power and current water conditions in the Eastern Sierras. Dan Sulzer described his planning duties with the Army Corps of Engineers and the Corps' interest in watershed management. Frank Zerunyan introduced himself and his connection with the South Bay Cities COG. The Chair noted Jon Harrison's appointment but would wait for his attendance at a future meeting for an introduction.

4.2 A Study on the Health Implications of Perchlorate Exposure and a State Water Resources Board Listening Session in the Region

Task Force member, Gerald Greene, D.Env, P.E., summarized the findings of a recent study on the health implications of perchlorate exposure conducted by the National Research Council. Perchlorate is a common contaminant in water that at certain levels has detrimental health effects. At controlled levels of concentration, however, it is beneficial in different functions and treatment. USEPA and the Defense Department are at odds over regulatory policy for perchlorate. The study noted that certain samples were too limited to support reliable conclusions from gathered data. Also, high level doses of perchlorate also can create severe impairments and not create thyroid cancer. The NRC study suggested that a level of exposure in the range of 20 ppb (USEPA's initial proposed standard set a limit of 1 ppb) appears to be a reasonable level for most exposure situations. TFM Tyler raised concerns about uncertainty and the risks to cities that deliver water to residential consumers. TFM Longville noted that infiltration can naturally clean water of perchlorate contamination.

He reported on a State Water Resources Control Board "listening session" on stormwater regulation held in Diamond Bar on January 12, 2005. Comments in that session included calls for the State Board to develop a more uniform stormwater policy. Other comment focused on the need for numeric limits in water regulations and permits. TFM Forester urged members of the Task Force to pay attention to appointments to the State Water Resources Control Board.

The Chair then asked Charlotte Pienkos on SCAG's government affairs staff to discuss the status of proposed legislation authored by Congressman Baca at the request of TFM Van Arsdale. This bill is modeled on other earlier federal bills concerned with water pollution clean up and is not an urgent piece of legislation. One issue of concern is the title and the discrepancy between the title ("Southern California...") and its proposed implementation area (the Santa Ana River watershed).

After discussion the Task Force directed staff to prepare a report and recommendations for the EEC's consideration at its March meeting on this proposed legislation.

4.3 Water Supply and Growth Prospects in the Mojave Basin

The Task Force was briefed on future growth and water supply prospects around the region by a panel of speakers from the Mojave River Basin. The panel included Kirby Brill, General Manager of the Mojave Water Agency (MWA); Randy Hill, General Manager of the Victor Valley Water District (VVWD); and Carlos Rodriguez of the Baldy View Chapter of the Building Industry Association.

Mr. Brill noted that population in their service area (5,000 square miles) is growing rapidly and creates frequent questions about the future of water supplies. Historically, the Basin's groundwater has been the primary

source of water supply and has been over pumped. MWA is a state water contractor which gives their area access to water imports from the California aqueduct. MWA is currently developing a Regional Water Management Plan. The Plan will improve water management in the MWA service area in support of two key objectives: balancing future water demands with future supplies and maximize the overall beneficial use of water throughout the service area.

Agricultural water use is going down with a weak alfalfa market. At the same time, municipal demand is growing, along with industrial use. Future projects have been identified for future action and a programmatic EIR has been prepared for MWA Board adoption. The Plan will have three uses: as a groundwater management plan, as an integrated water resource plan and as an urban water management plan. These features position the Basin to be competitive in attracting outside financial resources (i.e., state bond funds) for future water development. The key lessons that have been learned in the Basin include: the groundwater aquifer needs to be well understood for its better management and proper recharge, imported water is critical and necessitates new pipeline construction and treatment facilities, additional groundwater storage and conjunctive uses need to be leveraged, and residential landscape-based conservation practices need to be extended throughout the area. Success in these areas will allow this high desert area to strike a workable balance between water supplies and the future water demand from expected growth in the Basin. The price of water will be a factor in striking this balance, along with the beneficial effects of many new partnerships that are being developed within the Basin and else where to better manage water resources for the Basin.

Carlos Rodriguez, representing the Baldy View Chapter of the BIA, highlighted the shortfall in housing in the state and within in the Basin. In just the last year there has been a 49% increase in home building in the incorporated areas of the Mojave Basin. Builders are very interested in cooperating with the water agencies to ensure that growth can be fully supported as key planning decisions are made. This cooperation is needed because of SB 221 and SB 610 requirements that link long-term water supplies and land use decisions. These factors make Urban Water Management Plans extremely important to many parties. This means that the building industry has moved from a utilities customer to a planning partner, from an observer to potentially a co-defendant. This legislation has moved water agencies from being water utilities to being growth planners with cities and counties and others. Builders want to incorporate new technologies in building plans that aid in water conservation both inside and outside the home.

Randy Hill, General Manager of VVWD, described their service area, rapid population growth and the District's operating budget. The District is heavily dependent on groundwater pumping and over time has experienced a significant drop in groundwater levels. The adjudication of the groundwater basin will begin to put controls on groundwater pumping and eventually aid in bringing water levels higher. The cost impacts of pumping under these new conditions will results in new decisions about which water sources a consumer will use. VVWD is doing long-range water planning to comply with the SB 211 and SB 610 requirements, along with working closely with MWA's planning. By 2020 it's expected that they will be fully using imported water supplies and local water supplies. These sources, along with conservation improvements, will meet the projected 2020 water demands in the VVWD service area. VVWD will be focusing on developed new local water supplies through water recycling, groundwater recharge and water conservation. One example is the District's conservation efforts is the "grass for cash" program in which VVWD pays 40 cents per square foot of grass landscaping removed from water usage. The District is also looking for major conservation gains in a wider use of EvapoTranspiration (ET) controllers by residents that should reduce up to 30% of the amount of water used in irrigating landscape. Recharge improvements are being helped by the development of new recharge basins with good infiltration conditions, along with new pipelines to supply these basins or send water on to treatment facilities. This kind of planning can bring system features that increase flexibility and

redundancy. The result from this is a more effective management of water resources.

4.4 Updating the Regional Comprehensive Plan

Jacob Lieb, Acting Lead Senior Regional Planner, briefed the Task Force on current plans for updating the Water Quality and Water Resources chapters of the Regional Comprehensive Plan. Preliminary content for the Water chapter will be presented to the Regional Comprehensive Plan Task Force on March 28. He indicated that a draft would be completed by the end of June and would focus on actions and outcomes that relate to current SCAG policies and other emerging regional issues.

5.0 CHAIR'S REPORT

There was no report.

6.0 STAFF REPORT

Staff reported on a well attended briefing session facilitated by staff on January 31 to bring Antelope Valley stakeholders together with the General Manager of the Orange County Water District to learn about the non-adjudication system for groundwater management used in Orange County. Dennis LaMoreaux, General Manager of the Palmdale Water District, also indicated that this discussion was helpful to the stakeholders as they explore alternative approaches to groundwater management.

7.0 TASK FORCE INFORMATION SHARING

TFM Forester reported on the need for communication with the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board on wet weather water quality standards and the Basin review process. He distributed a letter to assist with this issue.

8.0 COMMENT PERIOD

Suzanne Dallman reminded attendees of the Compton Creek Watershed summit.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

ATTENDANCE SUMMARY:

Elected Members: Dennis Washburn (Chair), Harry Baldwin, Margaret Clark, Norm Eckenrode, Larry Forester, Mike Miller, Shenna Moqet, Sidney Tyler, Jr., Frank Zerunyan.

Liaison Members: Suzanne Dallman, Thomas Erb, Gerald Greene, Heather Merenda (via phone), Daniel Sulzer.

Minutes prepared and approved by Daniel E. Griset, Sr. Regional Planner and Staff to the Task Force.